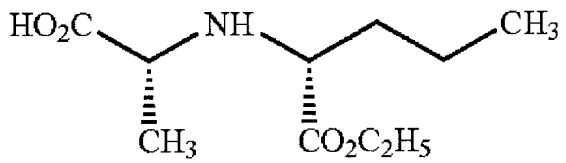
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing perindopril, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, which process comprises:

(i) condensation of norvaline ethyl ester with pyruvic acid to yield N-[(S)-1-carbethoxybutyl]-(S)-alanine (II), wherein said condensation is carried out under catalytic hydrogenation at a pressure ranging from 5 to 10 bars and said catalyst and any inorganic salts present in the reaction medium are removed by filtration to obtain a filtrate, the filtrate is concentrated and N-[(S)-1-carbethoxybutyl]-(S)-alanine is isolated by precipitation by the addition of a solvent selected from acetone and ethyl acetate;

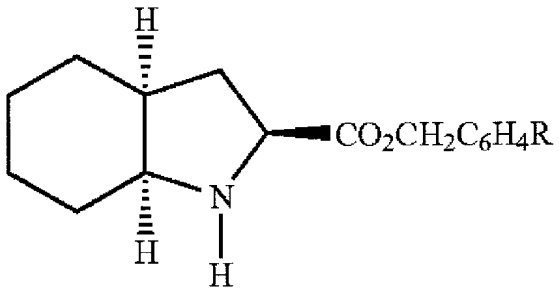


II

(ii) conversion of an alkali metal salt of S-indoline-2-carboxylic acid to (2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid by hydrogenation using 5% rhodium on alumina at a pressure of from 5 to 20 bar;

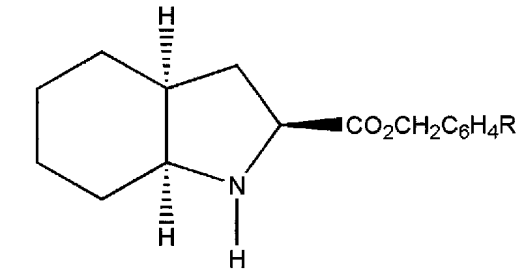
(iii) preparing a substituted benzyl ester of the (2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid (I), by reaction of (2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid with the corresponding substituted benzyl alcohol of formula $HOCH_2C_6H_4R$, wherein either said (2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid is treated with an excess of the alcohol and thionyl chloride, excess alcohol is distilled off and the residue treated with a solvent to obtain the substituted benzyl ester of (2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid as a hydrochloride; or said

(2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid is treated with an excess of the alcohol and heated with toluene using a molar quantity of p-toluene sulphonic acid, to obtain the substituted benzyl ester of (2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid as a salt, and converting the salt to the base, preferably by treatment with ammonia; and



I

(iv) coupling the ~~a~~ substituted benzyl ester of (2S,3aS,7aS)-octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid (I) from step (iii) with the N-[(S)-carbethoxybutyl]-(S)-alanine (II) from step (i)~~:~~



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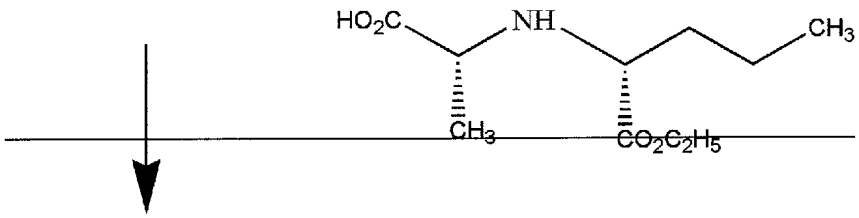

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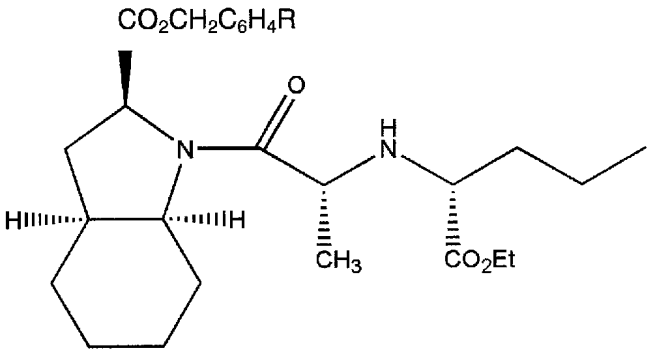
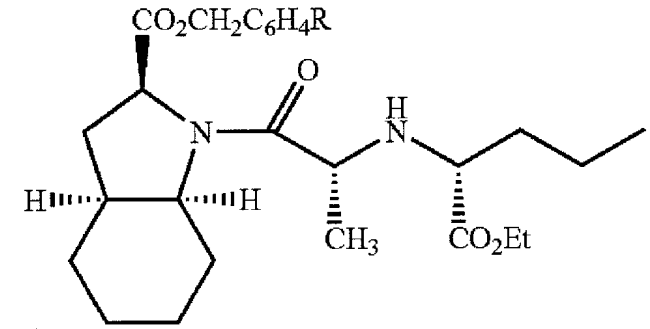


III

~~where R represents a halo, C_{1-4}alkoxy or nitro substituent,~~ to form the ester of formula III,



III

wherein the coupling is carried out in the presence of N,N-dicyclohexyl carbodiimide (DCC) and 1-hydroxybenzotriazole (HOBT)[[:]]; and converting the ester of formula III to perindopril or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

2-35. (Canceled)

36. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein R represents a 4-substituent.

37. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein the coupling in step (iv) is carried out at a temperature below 20°C~~, preferably in the range 10-15°C~~.

38. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein from 1.5 to 1.7 mole DCC are employed per mole of the ester of formula I.

39. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1, which includes deprotection of the compound of formula III by hydrogenolysis in the presence of a noble metal catalyst.

40. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 39, wherein the catalyst is palladium on carbon.

41. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the perindopril is converted to a pharmaceutically acceptable salt.

42. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 41, wherein the perindopril is converted to the tert butyl amine salt.

43. (Canceled)

44. (Canceled)

45. (Canceled)

46. (Canceled)

47. (Canceled)

48. (Canceled)

49. (Canceled)

50. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 49~~, wherein the hydrogenation in step (ii) is carried out at a pressure of 10 to 15 bar.

51. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 49~~, wherein said hydrogenation in step (ii) is effected in the presence of alkali and the octahydroindole-2-carboxylic acid salt so formed is treated with mineral acid to release the free acid.

52. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 49~~, wherein the alkali metal salt of said S-indoline-2-carboxylic acid is the sodium salt.

53. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 49~~, wherein the hydrogenation in step (ii) is carried out in a polar solvent selected from C_{1-4} alcohols and water, or mixtures thereof.

54. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 49~~, wherein the product of step (ii) is crystallized from acetonitrile.

55. (Canceled)

56. (Canceled)

57. (Canceled)

58. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 57~~, wherein the condensation in step (i) is effected in ~~a lower alcohol, preferably~~ ethanol.

59. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 57~~, wherein said norvaline ethyl ester is included in the reaction medium as the hydrochloride salt thereof, in the presence of a base.

60. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 57~~, wherein said catalytic hydrogenation is carried out in a hydrogenator, in the presence of palladium on carbon as the catalyst.

61. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 60, wherein said catalyst is 10% palladium on carbon.

62. (Canceled)

63. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 57~~, wherein the precipitation solvent for N-[(S)-1-carbethoxybutyl]-(S)-alanine in step (i) is acetone.

64. (Canceled)

65. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 ~~claim 43~~, which further comprises converting perindopril free base to perindopril erbumine.

66. (Canceled)

67. (Canceled)